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FM AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0424

INFO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 7688

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0141

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 2244

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0129

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0150

RUEHBJS/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0390

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1079

RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0041

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SUBJECT: LDP KINKI BLOCK CONVENTION A NON-EVENT

**¶1.** (U) LDP Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe's American-style political roadshow, the LDP convention, came to Osaka August 5 for its first Kinki Block performance before an audience of 1200 from the six-prefecture region centered around Osaka and Kyoto.

**¶2.** (U) Disappointingly, only Takebe attended from Tokyo LDP HQ, and none of the declared or potential candidates for the September presidential election were present, despite the fact that FinMin Tanigaki, the sole declared candidate at this stage, hails from nearby Kyoto. According to Takebe, the purpose of the block convention is not to serve as a primary for a presidential election but to strengthen the LDP through "decentralization" of the party.

**¶3.** (SBU) The only drama seemed to have been unintentional. Leading (and still unannounced) candidate Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe was not permitted to attend the event. LDP Lower House member Yasuhide Nakayama related that although Abe wanted to attend, local organizers, perhaps attempting to maximize the news value of Abe's campaign appearances in their home districts, used a technicality to keep him out of the convention.

**¶4.** (U) After remarks by LDP Dietmembers, Osaka Governor Ohta, and political commentators, representatives of the six prefectures stated their opinions on how the party should address economic and social issues in the region. There was a keenly felt sense of decline in the economic and political influence of Japan's number two population center and former manufacturing heartland. The convention adopted a resolution to strengthen cooperation among the prefectures of the region, revitalize the economy and promote true decentralization of power from Tokyo. The party members also pledged to do their best to win next April's unified local elections and the July 2007 Upper House elections.

**¶5.** (SBU) By the time all the Dietmembers went onstage to cheer "Gambaroo" ("Let's work hard!") together for the finale, half of the audience had already left. The audience mood was subdued and the applause was lackluster, largely due to the lack of candidates and real debate.

RUSSEL